

-23-

CLAIMS:

1. A dispenser for dispensing packets particularly, but not exclusively, cigarette packets, said dispenser comprising a magazine for holding a plurality of packets standing in an upright position, means for pushing the plurality of packets towards a dispensing end of the magazine, means defining a column at said dispensing end of the magazine, means for lifting the leading packet of the plurality upwards out of the magazine and into said column and means for supporting a packet that has been lifted into said column to prevent the packet from dropping back down said column.
2. A dispenser as claimed in claim 1, and including a displaceable closure element located at the upper end of said column, a packet at the upper end of the column, when being lifted in the column, engaging and displacing the closure element to permit that packet to emerge from the upper end of the column.
3. A dispenser as claimed in claim 2, wherein said closure element is in the form of a hinged lid, a packet at the upper end of the column, when being lifted in the column, pressing on the lid to lift it and permitting that packet to emerge from the upper end of the column.
4. A dispenser as claimed in claim 2, wherein said closure element is in the form of an elongate comb with flexible bristles, a packet at the upper end of the column, when being lifted in the column, displacing the flexible bristles and protruding

therethrough.

5. A dispenser as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein said means for pushing the packets towards the dispensing end of the magazine comprises a pressure plate and a spring.

6. A dispenser as claimed in claim 5, wherein said spring is an elongate leaf spring which is wound to coil form, the inner end of the wound coil being fixed and the outer end of the coil being attached to the pressure plate.

7. A dispenser as claimed in any preceding claim, and including sensor means located at the upper end of the column, said sensor means being activated by a packet being dispensed.

8. A dispenser as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 7, wherein said lifting means comprises a lever structure which is pivotally mounted at one end and which has a platform at the other end, there being means for swinging said lever structure in an upward arc so that said platform bears on the underside of a packet to be lifted.

9. A dispenser as claimed in claim 8, wherein said lever structure is in the form of a parallelogram linkage so that said platform moves vertically.

10. A dispenser as claimed in claim 8 or 9, wherein said means for swinging

the lever structure in an upward arc comprises a rotatable cam with lobes one of which, each time the cam rotates, bears on the underside of said lever structure to lift said structure.

11. A dispenser as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 7, wherein said lifting means comprises an elongate resiliently flexible element, there being means for reciprocating said element so that one end of the element bears on the underside of a packet to be lifted.
12. A dispenser as claimed in claim 11, and comprising a first spool, an electric motor for driving said first spool, a second spool, an endless belt entrained around said spools and a linkage connected to said belt for reciprocal movement as the belt moves, said linkage being connected to said flexible element for reciprocating said flexible element.
13. A dispenser as claimed in claim 11 or 12, and including aligning means in the form of a plurality of spools, said resiliently flexible element passing between said spools and being aligned with the column by the spools.
14. A dispensing apparatus comprising a first compartment having a top surface on which a cash register can stand, a second compartment which is vertically elongate, one end of the first compartment communicating with the lower end of the second compartment, a plurality of dispensers as defined above in said compartments,

-26-

said magazines being side-by-side in the first compartment and said columns being side-by-side in the second compartment.

15. A dispensing apparatus as claimed in claim 14, wherein said second compartment, on the side thereof remote from the first compartment, has a transparent window so that packets in the columns in the second compartment are visible from outside the dispensing apparatus.